

# Mian language

**Mian** is an Ok language spoken in the Telefomin district of the Sandaun province in Papua New Guinea by the Mian people. It has some 3,500 speakers spread across two dialects: West Mian (a.k.a. Suganga), with approximately 1,000 speakers in around Yapsiei, and East Mian, with approximately 2,500 speakers in and around Timeilmin, Temsakmin, Sokamin, Gubil, Fiak and Hotmin.<sup>[2]</sup> Phonologically, Mian is very similar to other Papuan languages in the size of its phoneme inventory, but it nevertheless has some peculiarities, such as its contrast between a plain [a] and a pharyngealized [a<sup>°</sup>]. It is also a tonal language.

<b>Mian</b>	
<b>Native to</b>	Papua New Guinea
<b>Region</b>	Sandaun province, Telefomin district
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Mianmin
<b>Native speakers</b>	from 1,400 (2000 census) <sup>[1]</sup> to 3,500 (2007) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Trans–New Guinea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Central &amp; South New Guinea ?</li> <li>▪ Ok</li> <li>▪ Mountain</li> <li>▪ Mian</li> </ul>
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	mpt – inclusive code Individual code: sug – Suganga
<b>Glottolog</b>	mian1255 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mian1255">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mian1255</a> ) <sup>[3]</sup>

## Contents

- Phonology**
  - Vowels
  - Consonants
  - Tones
- Nouns**
- References**
- Digital resources**

## Phonology

### Vowels

Mian has 6 vowels, including the pharyngealized open front vowel.

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Back</u>
	Unrounded	Rounded
<u>Close</u>	i /i/	u /u/
<u>Close-mid</u>		o /o/
<u>Open-mid</u>	e /ɛ/	
<u>Open</u>	a /a/ aa /a <sup>°</sup> /	

And 4 diphthongs:

<b>Ending with /i/</b>	<b>Ending with /u/</b>
ai /áɪ/	au /áʊ/
ei /éɪ/	ou /óʊ/

/ɛ/ is realized as [ə] in word-initial low-tone syllables, [ɛ] elsewhere.

/a/ is realized as [ə] in unaccented syllables, [ə] in word-initial low-tone syllables beginning with a consonant, [a] elsewhere.

/o/ is realized as [ɔ] in word-initial low-tone syllables and in syllables ending in a voiceless plosive or [ŋ], [o] elsewhere.

/u/ is realized as [ʊ] in word-initial low-tone syllables, [u] elsewhere.

## Consonants

Mian has 15 consonants:

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Labiodental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>		<u>Glottal</u>
						<u>Plain</u>	<u>Labialized</u>	
<b>Plosive</b>	<u>Voiceless</u>			t /t/		k /k/	<b>kw</b> /kʷ/	
	<u>Voiced</u>	b /b/		d /d/		g /g/	<b>gw</b> /gʷ/	
<b>Nasal</b>		m /m/		n /n/		ng /ŋ/		
<b>Fricative</b>			f /f/	s /s/				<b>h</b> /h/
<b>Approximant</b>				l /l/	y /j/		w /w/	

/b/ is realized as [ᵇ] word-initially, [pʰ] or [p̚] syllable-finally, [b] elsewhere.

Examples: **banǒn** [ᵇbàñõn] *lower arm*, **mǎab** [mǎ ʳ : p̚] *frog*, **teběl** [tʰɛbɛl] *ant*

/t/ is realized as [tʰ] before vowels, [tʰ] or [t̚] syllable-finally.

Examples: **tam** [tʰàm] *temple*, **mát** [máṭ] *gall bladder*

/k/ is realized as [kʰ] before vowels, [kʰ] or [k̚] syllable-finally, sometimes [x] between vowels, [qʰ] before [aʳ].

Examples: **kemin** [kʰèmìn] *to do*, **manggěk** [màñgɛk̚] *bee*, **okok** [òxòk̚] *work*, **kaawá** [qʰàʳ wá] *steel axe*

/g/ is realized as [ᵑg] word-initially, [g] elsewhere.

Examples: **gát** [ᵑgáṭ] *mole*, **manggěk** [màñgɛk̚] *bee*

/gʷ/ is realized as [ᵑgʷ] word-initially, [gʷ] elsewhere.

Examples: **gwaán** [ᵑgʷàán] *spider*, **gwalgwäl** [ᵑgʷàlgʷàl] *twins*

## Tones

Mian has 5 tonemes:

Tone	Example
Low	<b>am</b> [àm] <i>house</i>
High	<b>án</b> [án] <i>arrow</i>
Low-High	<b>ăam</b> [ă᷑ : m] <i>Pandanus species</i>
High-Low	<b>hâs</b> [hâs] <i>hat</i>
Low-High-Low	<b>aam</b> [à᷑ : â] <i>older sister</i>

The tones of Mian are very complex, as they are subject to various phonological processes, and furthermore, they can be used for indicating various grammatical aspects, especially in connection with verbs, where the tones are crucial for understanding.

Consider the two verb forms below, being non-hodiernal and imperfective respectively:

**dolâbibe** [dòlábíbè] *I wrote*

**dolâbibe** [dòlábíbè] *I am writing*

## Nouns

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Large objects in Mianmin are feminine, while small objects are masculine.<sup>[4]</sup>

(1)

*imen-e*  
/taro-M/  
'small/one taro'

(2)

*imen-o*  
/taro-F/  
'large taro/large quantity of taro'

## References

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1. Mian (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/mpt/>) at Ethnologue (18th ed., 2015)  
Suganga (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/sug/>) at Ethnologue (18th ed., 2015)
2. Fedden, Olcher Sebastian (2007). A Grammar of Mian, a Papuan Language of New Guinea (<http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/792225/>) (PhD thesis). University of Melbourne. [hdl:11343/39327](http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39327) (<http://hdl.handle.net/11343%2F39327>).
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Mianic" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mian1255>). Glottolog 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Foley, William A. (2018). "The morphosyntactic typology of Papuan languages". In Palmer, Bill (ed.). The Languages and Linguistics of the New Guinea Area: A Comprehensive Guide. The World of Linguistics. 4. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. pp. 895–938. [ISBN 978-3-11-028642-7](#).

## Digital resources

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- Fedden, Sebastian; Timothy Feist; Matthew Baerman; Greville G. Corbett; Gunter Senft (2015). *Mian and Kilivila Collection* (<http://www.smg.surrey.ac.uk/collection>). University of Surrey. doi:[10.15126/SMG.30/1](https://doi.org/10.15126/SMG.30/1) (<https://doi.org/10.15126%2FSMG.30%2F1>).

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